

Mountain Democrat

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Cameron Park man may have drowned in Lake Tahoe



A duo of volunteers hauls in buckets of trash at Hangtown Creek in Placerville during the 2017 Great Sierra River Cleanup. Hangtown Creek will be one of 12 local sites where volunteers can clean up trash on Sept. 15. Courtesy photo

News

Volunteers needed for 10th annual river cleanup

By **Mackenzie Myers**

In conjunction with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and California Coastal Cleanup Day, the American River Conservancy is looking for volunteers to help clean up one of California's major watersheds on Saturday, Sept. 15.

ARC outreach coordinator Taylor Benedict said the conservancy is hosting 12 different cleanup sites in the area, ranging from Folsom to Somerset. Locations include Beals Point, Browns Ravine and Folsom Point in Folsom; Salmon Falls and Skunk Hollow near Zee Estates; Traverse Creek; Henningsen Park in Lotus; Marshall Gold Discovery Park in Coloma; Hangtown Creek in Placerville; the Amador-El Dorado county line on Highway 49; the Happy Valley bridge; River Pines; and where Mt. Aukum meets the middle fork of the Cosumnes River.

More details are available at www.arconservancy.org. Benedict said participants can check the event calendar on the conservancy's website to sign up, or email her directly at stewardship@arconservancy.org with questions.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy project coordinator Theresa Burgess said they typically try to have volunteers signed up by the Wednesday before the event — which is Sept. 12 this year — but participants are welcome to walk up to sites.

"If you're willing to clean, we're willing to take you on," Burgess said.

However, the ARC will be holding a volunteer appreciation lunch at Wakamatsu Farm following the cleanup. Volunteers will need to RSVP for that ahead of time by emailing Benedict or checking a box on the signup form.

In areas that typically require paid entry, such as Folsom Lake State Park or Marshall Gold Discovery Park, Benedict said volunteers will receive parking passes that waive their entry fee during the cleanup.

Though the ARC will supply water, latex gloves, sharps containers and garbage bags, volunteers should come prepared to work outdoors in sunny weather. Benedict recommended participants bring sunscreen, a hat, snacks and gardening gloves, if they prefer sturdier protection than latex gloves. Burgess suggested bringing buckets to hold trash as a no-waste alternative to bags and wearing closed-toe shoes.

“Some people really want to bring flip-flops and you’re welcome to do what you’re comfortable with,” Benedict said. “But this is the outdoors we’re talking about. There’s poison oak and snakes.”

In the nine years since it piggybacked off the Coastal Cleanup, Burgess said the Sierra Cleanup has drawn about 30,000 volunteers, averaging between 3,000 and 5,000 per year. The day is partially about educating the public, especially its younger members, on why it’s important to keep waterways clean, whether they’re at mountain peaks or beaches.

“One of the hardest things to teach is if a piece of trash end up at a camping spot in the mountains and you don’t take it with you, it can make it out to the ocean,” Burgess said.

Since the Sierra River Cleanup began, volunteers have removed over one million pounds of trash from nearly 3,000 miles of rivers in the region. Of the trash that comes out, some of it is recyclable, like cans and bottles. Benedict said in other local river cleanups she’s done, micro-trash like gum wrappers and cigarette butts have been pervasive. But a main chunk of the garbage that comes in? Socks and sunglasses.

“You’ll find a single shoe and you’re like, ‘How did this happen?’” Benedict said.

While Benedict has never participated in the Sierra River Cleanup specifically, she said those who have are reporting less and less trash over the years.

“People are making more of a cleaning effort. People are making more of an effort not to litter,” Benedict said. “It seems less satisfying the day of, but big-picture we are making a change and people are starting to be stewards of local waterways.”

